

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15

PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SAM-01 SS-20 L-03 H-03 DODE-00

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P R 311915Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL CURACAO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1690

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY MARTINIQUE

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CURACAO 0061

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINS, NA

SUBJECT: LABOR PROBLEMS ON ST. MAARTEN CREATE UNREST

1. WILLY HAISE, AN UNSUCCESSFUL RADICAL LABOR AGITATOR ON CURACAO HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN CREATING SERIOUS UNREST ON ST. MAARTEN. IN AN ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE BOTH CONSTRUCTION AND POWER COMPANY WORKERS FOR HIS UNIFA (UNITED FEDERATION OF THE ANTILLES) HAISE HAS BROUGHT ST. MAARTEN TO THE BRINK OF A LARGE SCALE STRIKE AND POSSIBLE RIOTS. UNIFA IS NOT LEGALLY RECOGNIZED BY THE GNA AND HAS NO LEGAL RIGHT TO STRIKE. IN ADDITION, LABOR MINISTER MCWILLIAM DECLARED A 30-DAY COOLING OFF PERIOD FOR THE DISPUTE ON JAN. 24 DURING WHICH TIME ANY STRIKE WOULD BE ILLEGAL. NEVERTHELESS, CONTINUING WORKER DISCONTENT FUELED BY INFLATION, HAS CAUSED A NUMBER OF WORKERS TO SUPPORT HAIZE AND UNIFA'S DEMAND FOR A 30 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE. THE AFFECTED COMPANIES ARE WILLING
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TO MAKE SOME COMPROMISE ON WAGE INCREASES BUT REMAIN ADAMANT

AGAINST RECOGNIZING UNIFA.

2. HAISE IS NOW CALLING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE ON ST. MAARTEN AND HAS SPOKEN OF RIOTING IF HIS DEMANDS ARE NOT MET. THE GNA HAS SENT ADDITIONAL POLICE TO ST. MAARTEN TO HANDLE POSSIBLE RIOTS. POLICE REINFORCEMENTS CONSIST OF 12 TO 16 RESERVE POLICEMEN; THE FRENCH HAVE REPORTEDLY REINFORCED THE GENDARME DETACHMENT ON THIS HALF OF THE ISLAND.

3. LABOR MINISTER MCWILLIAM YESTERDAY FLEW TO ST. MAARTEN TO STUDY THE SITUATION. HE MADE A TELEVISION ADDRESS IN WHICH HE QTE INFORMED THE PUBLIC UNQTE OF HAIZE'S BACKGROUND. THERE ARE NEWSPAPER RUMORS THAT GOVERNOR VAN DELDEN IS PLANNING TO RESIGN BUT THESE ARE NOT NEW.

4. GNA CONCERN AND THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION ARE UNDERLINED BY REPORTS THAT QTE SENATOR UNQTE CLAUDE WATHEY, THE BENEVOLENT POLITICAL DESPOT OF ST. MAARTEN WHO RUNS THE AREA AS HIS PERSONAL FIEF HAD HIS CAR STONED BY DISSATISFIED WORKERS.

5. COMMENT: AS THE CONGEN HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, ST. MAARTEN CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST LIKELY TROUBLE SPOTS OF THE NA. THE YOUNG BLACK NATIVES OF ST. MAARTEN, REINFORCED BY HUNDREDS OF IMMIGRANTS FROM THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ISLANDS, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND HAITI, HAVE SEEN THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF HUGE U.S.-OWNED CASINO HOTEL PROJECTS IN WHICH THEY HAVE LITTLE OR NO ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OTHER THAN SERVILE JOBS; THIS LARGE IMPORT OF CHEAP LABOR WITH ISLAND GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, HAS SERVED TO DEPRESS WAGES IN THE SMALL JOB MARKET. DUBIOUS U.S. CASINO OPERATORS THROUGH CORRUPTION OF LOCAL OFFICIALS NOW DICTATE MOST OF THE OPERATION OF THE ISLAND. INFLATION HAS RAGED UNCONTROLLED WITH THE FEW MERCHANTS SELLING BASIC FOOD NECESSITIES ABOUT 50 PERCENT HIGHER THAN THE INFLATED PRICES OF THE OTHER ISLANDS OF THE NA TO THEIR CAPTIVE CUSTOMERS. THE REMOTENESS OF ST. MAARTEN TO CURACAO ENCOURAGES UNCONTROLLED PRICE MARK-UPS. THE UNREST AND MURDERS IN ST. CROIX HAS LONG WORRIED GNA OFFICIALS WHO FEAR IT MAY CATCH ON IN NEARBY ST. MAARTEN. LABOR AGITATOR HAIZE WHO HAS LONG BEEN FRUSTRATED
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IN HIS LABOR ORGANIZATION EFFORTS ON THE OTHER ISLANDS OF THE NA IS NOW APT TO USE ALL MEANS TO FORM HIS OWN UNION ON ST. MAARTEN.

6. ONE FLARE-UP ON ST. MAARTEN OR EVEN THE SMALLEST RIOT COULD HAVE DISASTROUS EFFECTS ON ITS TOURIST INDUSTRY ON WHICH IT SOLELY DEPENDS. MANY LOCAL BLACKS REALIZE THIS AND IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO SEE STRONG OPPOSITION AGAINST

HAIZE THUS CREATING TWO OPPOSING BLACK GROUPS. CONGEN HAS
HEARD RUMORS OF MUTTERINGS THAT HAIZE SHOULD BE QTE TAKEN CARE
OF UNQTE.

7. IN THE EVENT OF ANY MISHAP TO HAIZE, HIS FOLLOWERS,
MOSTLY YOUNG DISCONTENTED BLACKS, WOULD MOST CERTAINLY BE STUNG
TO ACTION.
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